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vented it to express the conception of a body of capital predetermined at once as to amount and direction, it is wholly unsuited to the now proposed use. Few words in our language have a more precise significance than the word "fund." Whenever it is used, the mass of readers will always understand that it expresses something which, first, already exists; second, is definite in extent; and, third, is dedicated to a specific use. Such is the wage-fund of McCulloch, Mill, and Fawcett. But to express a mass of wealth derived indifferently from capital and from income, and uncertain both as to amount and direction until it has actually been distributed among the intended recipients, the word surely is the least appropriate, the most misleading, that could be chosen from our vocabulary.

FRANCIS A. WALKER.

ART. V. — AN EPISODE IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

II. THE REIGN OF THE RING.

IN the last number of this Review* a sketch was attempted of the characters of those who composed the famous Ring, which in the closing days of the year 1868 had so far succeeded in its designs as to place one of its agents at the head of the executive department of the State, and another at the head of the executive department of the city of New York. Early in the year 1869 John T. Hoffman was inaugurated Governor at Albany, and at the same time A. Oakey Hall ascended the steps of the City Hall, the successor of Hoffman in the office of Mayor. The municipal new year was ushered in quietly and without any demonstration, or, as the Ring organ, the "Leader," more happily expressed it, the Mayor "glided gracefully and modestly into his new post of honor"; and thereupon, the same high authority further proceeded to state that "the machinery of local government is in excellent working order; every office is being filled with capable men." The Board of

* No. CCXLV., October, 1874, pp. 359 - 408.

Supervisors was reorganized at this time, and, probably with a view to securing a proper amount of capacity in that office, Tweed was reappointed its chairman. Hall was succeeded in the office of District Attorney by ex-Judge Garvin, who always thereafter approved himself in his new capacity an obedient servant of the Ring. Under the benign influence of a largely increasing prosperity Tweed now became liberal, and on the 27th of February he made a present of one thousand dollars to the Sisters of Mercy, which act, together with a reception which he gave in the autumn of the same year at his home at Greenwich to the children from the Randal's Island nursery, called forth loud praises of his generosity from all the Ring journals. In accordance with well-established precedent, Hoffman's portrait was ordered to be painted for the Governor's room at the City Hall; and, probably for the familiar reason which induced honest Dogberry to select neighbor Seacole to be constable, the powers that were directed the Street Commissioner to have the desired work of art executed. The sum appropriated to this end was one thousand dollars, of which amount it is probable the artist received a portion, though the bulk of it was doubtless absorbed by Tweed as his commission on the "job."

Meanwhile the election of Hoffman to the governorship had involved very considerable changes in the Tammany organization. He had held the position of Grand Sachem; and now, upon his resignation, Tweed was duly chosen his successor. Soon after this promotion the new chieftain delivered a speech relative to the city tax levy, in which he took the position that custom alone sanctioned the practice of sending the New York City tax levy to Albany for adjustment by the Legislature, that duty properly pertaining to the Board of Supervisors. Not unnaturally, the orator would have preferred that the acts of the city board, of which he was chief, should not be revised or audited by any tribunal other than itself. It was not long after, also, that the well-known Henry Smith, or "Hank," as he was popularly known, was, in probable furtherance of the plan of having "all offices filled with capable men," appointed Police Commissioner. In this capacity Mr. Smith subsequently rendered very useful services to the Ring, but at the moment his

appointment was received by the more timid and respectable elements of New York society with an undisguised if helpless dismay. They now realized that they were wholly given over into the hands of the plunderer and the ruffian, and they had not yet discovered, as subsequently for a time they thought they had, what remarkable business capacity their new rulers were endowed with.

Meanwhile the new Mayor had early adopted a line of tactics thoroughly in keeping with his supposed versatility of character and well calculated to ingratiate him with the general community over which he had been called to govern. Among the better classes he played the part of the *littérateur* and general man of the world ; pushing himself forward whenever occasion offered with an impudent yet outwardly cultivated self-assertion. At the same time he allowed no opportunity to escape him of playing the vulgar harlequin tricks of the lowest demagogue when his official duties brought him in contact with the lower orders. Accordingly this ex-Know Nothing Protestant did not hesitate on St. Patrick's day to disguise himself in a green coat in which to review the Sons of Hibernia. Indeed, it would have been wholly out of keeping with the mountebank element in his character had he not taken delight in parading the dignity of his office with much bustle and pretension on every occasion of civic display. His telegram on the completion of the Pacific Railroad was a fair sample of that forth-putting assumption on his part, for the exhibition of which nothing came amiss. On the other hand, in remote imitation of Jefferson, he abolished several of the formalities of his office ; ostentatiously doing away, for instance, with the use of the formal title of " Your Honor the Mayor," with which his predecessors had been addressed. To affirm that he was all things to all men is but to say that as Mayor he did not cease to be A. Oakey Hall. He flattered journalists by professing to be a newspaper-man ; among lawyers he was a member of the bar ; he was a politician in caucuses, a private gentleman in society ; among actors, a dramatist ; and everywhere and always a pushing, pertinacious self-seeker.

Upon the occasion of his inauguration it had been the custom for the incoming Mayor to send a message to the Common

Council. This, Hall omitted to do on the pretence that he wished to become familiar with his duties before announcing his views. It is almost needless, however, to add that his preliminary studies in municipal concerns do not appear to have been very profound, or of a nature greatly to tax his powers, as they resulted in little more than plans for cleaning the streets, which, however, it is undeniably true were then shockingly dirty. He also created a nine days' newspaper sensation, such as he specially delighted in, by issuing a ridiculous warning to strangers in regard to gift enterprises and other metropolitan swindles. It is, however, not improbable that there was an element of design in all this delay and ostentatious triviality ; it is very possible that a man of Hall's shrewdness may have felt a natural desire to avoid discussing more serious topics sooner than was absolutely necessary. In any event it was not until after four months' delay that, on the 29th of April, the long-looked-for message appeared ; and after all it was but another instance of the parturient mountain. Yet it was in one respect significant. In it the Mayor closely echoed the keynote already sounded by the Ring master and Tammany Sachem. He demanded that the Legislature should concede to New York City the same control over its finances which was enjoyed by the other municipalities of the State.

As a whole the message was decidedly unsatisfactory, and the "Times," in commenting upon it, did but express the public sentiment when it declared that the people generally had no faith in the city's rulers, and that in view of their mismanagement of the municipal affairs, it was folly for them to expect greater license than they already possessed. Not all of the newspapers were, however, equally outspoken either upon this or on subsequent occasions ; and for very good and sufficient reasons. The Ring in general by no means ignored or despised the power of the press, and Hall in particular had even an inordinate opinion of it. In this connection, therefore, it will not be out of place to refer to some of the methods through which a suitable degree of influence was now brought to bear upon newspapers, their editors and proprietors. The most potent of these was naturally the corporation advertisements, under which name the annual expenditures had grown

steadily in amount, until they had now reached the dimensions of an enormous abuse. From this perennial source a score or more of periodicals drew their entire subsistence. Not even a pretence was made that the corporation advertisements were distributed in proportion to circulation; but those journals whose owners and editors stood highest in favor with the established authorities, obtained vastly the greater proportion, while not a few really influential newspapers were hardly recognized as existing.

The Ring government now distributed the advertisements among twenty-six daily and fifty-four weekly newspapers. Of these a goodly proportion were mere pauper concerns, wholly dependent on this source for their existence, as at a later period became very apparent; for no sooner was it exhausted than twenty-seven of them incontinently suspended publication. It is almost unnecessary to add that much of the advertising was illegal, and of course paid at exorbitant rates. Every species of fraud was permitted and even encouraged. At times, with or without the authority of the city officials, the newspapers would print the advertisements in their reading columns and charge special rates therefor; at other times they would charge as advertisements what was printed as news; and in yet other cases charges were presented and allowed for services which had never been rendered at all. One publisher actually reprinted a file of his newspaper, in order to forge evidence that he had performed the service for which he had made a fraudulent charge; and his trick was recently detected only through a blunder of the printer, who carelessly allowed an event which occurred in November to find its way into the news items of the previous April. The following are some of the payments on account of advertising which were made to the papers designated, during the period the Ring was in power, between 1867 and 1871. "Transcript," \$783,498.09; "Daily News," \$489,980.67; "Star," \$241,711.01; "Pomerooy's Democrat," \$130,881.90; "Express," \$157,239.17; "World," \$120,775.60; "Commercial," \$101,050.90; "Herald," \$91,491.88; "Sun," \$82,850.59; "Tribune," \$54,847.94; "Times," \$75,160.08.

This list is intensely suggestive not only of the magnitude

and lavish use made of the corruption fund, but also of the secret motives which must have influenced its distribution. There is no one who ever turns over the sheets of a New York newspaper who can read without amazement the names of the recipients of the largess. The chances will be considerable that, unless he is himself connected with the press, he will first become aware of the existence of certain journals by seeing their names opposite an array of figures representing an amount of money which is simply incredible. The sums paid to the "Transcript," the "Star," the "News," and the "Democrat" are susceptible of an easy and obvious explanation. A share of the plunder passed into the pockets of the Ring. It is very probable also that the Ring found its account in paying liberal subsidies to those papers which circulated most largely among the class from which itself had sprung, and upon which it rested for support.

Those who now controlled the City Hall were indeed adepts in the art of manufacturing public opinion. No corruption was too direct and too brutal for them; nor was any finesse too delicate. The whole machinery was kept in excellent working order and in constant operation. One familiar and effective mode of influencing the press was to employ a set of ready writers in the composition of letters to the journals of other cities, which contained accounts no less ingenious than elaborate of political occurrences in the metropolis. The covert burden of these productions was always the virtues of the Ring. Their operation was twofold; not only did they spread abroad an exalted estimate of the character and capacity of the Tammany chiefs, but, as they were invariably copied into the columns of New York papers, with ostentatious credit to the journals in which they originally appeared, they created a species of public sentiment at home as well as at large. But a more direct means of procedure was found in the grant of sinecures on the city pay-rolls. These were lavishly distributed among the regular reporters, and even hangers-on, of the different city papers. Not less than a dozen of the "Herald" staff, it is alleged, were thus quartered, and other papers were equally well represented. At one period this condition of affairs reached such a pitch that it was scarcely necessary for a

person to do more than pretend to have some connection with the press, in order to secure himself a more or less comfortable situation in some department of the city government.

It would, however, be a great mistake to suppose that Tweed or Sweeny or Hall, merely because they considered it necessary to subsidize the press, were troubled with any great degree of sensitiveness as to its criticisms. On the contrary, in their hard, cynical philosophy, the members of the press were looked upon as like all other men, and it was simply a question of purchase and sale. They were a power in the community, and a very noisy one; there were too many of them to admit of a wholesale purchase, and it thus became a delicate question as to how many and which were worth buying. That point definitely settled, it only remained to agree on a price; or, if the party in question was not in the market for money, then he must be gratified with whatever he preferred to money, — whether notoriety, power, or flattery. As for the criticism and denunciation of the unsubsidized press, the policy pursued in regard to it was a perfectly simple one. As long as it was possible to do so it was ignored. When charges became too specific and gross to be longer ignored with impunity, they were met with a flat denial; to this, in time, succeeded a partial and deceptive explanation; and when that would no longer suffice, there came at last the brutal and insolent, “What are you going to do about it?”

As yet, however, the gentlemen of the Ring were very far indeed from this phase of defiance. On the contrary, about the time that he entered upon the mayoralty, Hall, at least, seems rather to have envied Tweed and Sweeny because of the greater share of attention bestowed on them in editorial columns. He even went so far as to write a highly characteristic letter to the “Tribune,” shortly before his election, in which he complained that, while his associates were constantly abused by the press, he alone was ignored; he accordingly offered to furnish material for the coveted attacks upon himself. It was, however, not long after his election before his every ambition in this respect must have been gratified, though the attacks rarely elicited any response from him. At first, indeed, he was greatly elated at this indication of his increased notoriety, and

the "Herald" in all probability exactly reflected his sentiments when, in referring at this time to the assaults of the press upon the Mayor, it spoke of him as having become quite famous as a public man and leading politician, and added: "At the rate in which he is progressing in popular favor it seems probable that the mayoralty will, in his case, be a stepping-stone to the office of Governor of the State, and there is no knowing where he will stop." Doubtless these were happy days for Hall, and in them he nursed many a delusive dream of bright ambition.

While such was the prosperous condition of affairs in the city, at Albany everything went on as smoothly as could be desired. The election of Hoffman had been very acceptable to the wealthier and older families which centred about Albany, and who looked upon the new Governor as one of themselves; and now they prepared to give him a cordial reception. He himself fully appreciated the social duties of his new position, and was both disposed and well qualified to acquit himself creditably of them. He accordingly leased a handsome house in Albany, where he subsequently dispensed a liberal hospitality. Those who composed the Ring well understood the importance of these accessories; they had undertaken to possess themselves of the first city in the New World, and they had the sagacity perhaps to appreciate their own social deficiencies, and the good fortune to secure through others a certain social recognition. The new Governor, for instance, even went to the great length of selecting as a member of his military staff, with the rank of general, one of Tweed's sons, who was in no way noted either for his soldierly disposition or his intellectual vigor.

The first message of Governor Hoffman received the unqualified praise of the "Leader" for "its admirable suggestions, its incontrovertible logic, and its broad, liberal sentiments." In reality, however, the document contained nothing that was new; though, indeed, it did possess the great merit of setting forth a plain and clear statement of the Democratic theory of municipal government. Hoffman was very ambitious, and he was perfectly conscious of the dangerous character of the company he was in. He always, therefore, maintained an ostentatious appearance of judicial impartiality in the performance of

his duties. His hands, however, were tied and his power limited. In the always expressive vulgarity of the "Herald" diction, "the Ring had poor Hoffman in its breeches-pocket." "It wields supreme power at Albany, as it were, by the crack of the whip or the snap of a finger."

The "Herald" was perfectly correct in its statement; those who controlled the city government of New York were now supreme at Albany, and William M. Tweed was the master spirit among that little knot of men; in him the Ring was personified. He had now fairly entered upon the full career of success and was at the climax of his glory. His insatiable activity and arrogant self-assertion carried everything before him. His associates paled into insignificance in the glare of his splendid activity. Sweeny had no desire to rival so boisterous and pushing an ally; while neither Connolly nor Hall possessed a tithe of his energy. Sweeny and Connolly, moreover, were ever harassed by the fear of exposure, and they protested against Tweed's extravagance and display; he, however, gave but a deaf ear to their entreaties and disregarded their warnings. His influence was supreme, not only in political circles, but with every class of people. A word or note from him was a sure passport to favor. He was as arrogant as he was shameless, and numerous characteristic anecdotes are told of him in both respects, a few of which are worth repeating. One day a henchman of his, who had a place on the police force, being arraigned before the Commissioners for some offence, besought the great man's intercession to save him from dismissal. Tweed, in response to his prayer, went directly to the police headquarters, entered the Commissioners' room, and, demanding the stenographic report of his client's examination, deliberately tore it up and threw it into the waste-paper basket. He believed every one to be corrupt, and for his own part was guilty of no concealment; in his view all men were either knaves or fools, and the former class admitted of a subdivision between honest knaves and hypocrites. He took pride in being an honest knave, and looked with scornful surprise on a man who, in his own language, gave "sixteen ounces to the pound every time." When Garvey, the Court House contractor, was ornamenting his country place at

Greenwich, he placed a number of casts of famous pieces of statuary about the grounds. While Tweed was examining the work on its completion, his attention was attracted to these, and he asked what they represented. Garvey named them in turn, and at last came to a flying Mercury. "Who the h— is that?" Tweed asked. "That," replied Garvey, "is Mercury, the god of merchants and thieves." "Good! that's bully!" exclaimed Tweed; "put him over the front door." Nor was this mere bravado; he really was as insensible as he appeared to the feeling which existed towards him among the better portion of his fellow-citizens. Not that indications of it did not reach him with sufficient frequency, but, whether he attributed them to envy, or hypocrisy, or uncharitableness, they failed to disturb his serenity. It does not, of course, need to be said that, with all the splendor of his establishment and equipage, he never arrived at the slightest social recognition; but this he probably regarded as a mere question of time. Neither could he always solace himself with the reflection that his more circumspect neighbors did not scrutinize his money more than that of other people; for once, when unsolicited he sent a contribution of a hundred dollars to the Methodist congregation of Greenwich, which was raising money for the purchase of an altar-cloth, the trustees immediately sent it back to him with a blunt message to the effect that they wanted no stolen money for such an object. Yet that the existence of such a public sentiment need in any way moderate his aspirations never seemed to occur to him. In August, 1869, he made an effort to supplant Mr. August Belmont as chairman of the general executive committee of the Democratic party, and one of his numerous political clubs very pointedly invited that gentleman to make way for him. The ostensible object of this move was to further Governor Hoffman's Presidential fortunes, in the event of whose election Mr. Tweed aspired to a more prominent political future for himself. Indeed, he now confided to his friends a consciousness that he was overworking himself; he was rich, he stood in need of relaxation, and, in the event of Hoffman's election, he would like, he intimated, to receive, as a recompense for his services, the English mission.

The temptation to stop and dwell upon the individual traits and peculiarities of so strange a political and moral monstrosity as Tweed is not easy to withstand. It is necessary, however, to recur to the position in which he had now succeeded in establishing himself, and in which he found free scope for the exercise of his avarice as well as for the display of his overbearing nature. Every new financial or industrial enterprise, of whatever nature, in order to be successful, must first set aside a share of its stock to Tweed, and elect him one of its officers. He had but to request a favor for a friend, and it was immediately granted; — for his will was little less than law with every office-holder of the State, from the Governor at Albany to the heads of the different departments in the city. His daily receptions at the Street Department partook almost of an imperial character. He rapidly and curtly heard complaint and petition, and dismissed each visitor with summary despatch. Besides administering the duties of this office, his attention was also divided among a score of other functions. He was State Senator, chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee, Grand Sachem of Tammany Society, chairman of the General Committee of Tammany Hall, chairman of the Court House Committee, President of the Americus and Blossom Clubs, Director of the Brooklyn Bridge Company, part owner of the New York Printing Company and of the “Transcript,” Director in the Third Avenue and several other Railroad Companies, and President of the Guardian Savings Bank. Well might the “Sun” refer to him as “the multiplied Tweed.”

More than once during his earlier life this man had tasted of poverty, and now as he grew older he had no fancy to repeat the experience. He loved money not only for what it would bring, — for he spent lavishly enough, — but he loved it for its own sake. His greed was simply insatiable, and, judging from the published record of the transfers of property, he would seem at one time to have contemplated the purchase of the whole of Manhattan Island. In 1871 he informed a friend that he had just paid off mortgages on his real estate to the extent of two millions of dollars. At another time he boasted that he was already worth twenty millions, and would soon be

as rich as Vanderbilt. Indeed, judging by its sudden growth; there is no reason to see why there should have been any limit to his wealth, for at this time he was rapidly and by many and effective processes drawing the whole substance of New York into his own capacious pockets. His hands were everywhere, and wherever they were, they were feeling for money. His proceedings were of every description, but may be said perhaps to have varied from stealing direct to theft consequential. Examples of each phase of speculation may perhaps as well be described here as elsewhere.

His official position naturally constituted Tweed's base of operations, though scarcely his most fruitful source of profit. As a matter of course he had the Board of Supervisors completely under his control, and met with little difficulty in securing its assent to any schemes, however corrupt. The meetings of this board were held in private and at irregular hours, apparently in order to keep the public in ignorance of its proceedings. A single incident will give a sufficient idea of the high-handed way in which Tweed now ruled it: on one occasion Supervisor Ely made inquiries at the office at 2.30 P. M., on the usual day of meeting, and was informed by the clerk that no meeting was contemplated for that day; at four o'clock on that same day a quorum of the Board was got together by Tweed, and passed the tax levy of about twenty millions, together with a large number of appropriations; they then adjourned without even taking the trouble to notify Mr. Ely that a meeting had been held.

In the Street Department Tweed was even more supreme than in the Board of Supervisors, if such a thing were possible; and it was in real-estate operations, which naturally sprang out of the projects decided upon in this department of the government, that the Ring and its wary satellites found their most certain and perhaps least reprehensible sources of wealth. Whenever "anything which had money in it" was in contemplation, the proper parties were always, in the language of Morgan to Major Pendennis, "in possession of certing infamation," or, as they themselves would have more tersely put it, they "had points." The Broadway widening "job" was a striking example of this class of operations, and in its history displays

sufficiently in detail both the *modus operandi* of the Ring and the amount of the profits which could be made to accrue to its members from a properly manipulated public improvement. The following is a succinct history of the undertaking.

The Legislature, by Act of May 17, 1869, authorized the widening of Broadway between Thirty-fourth and Fifty-ninth Streets. The new lines were to be established by the Commissioners of the Central Park, and the assessment of benefits and damages was to be made under the general laws regulating street widenings. Under the precedents in similar cases the tax-payers were entitled to choose one of the three commissioners who were to fix the assessments, the corporation counsel nominated another, while the third should have been the choice of an independent judge. Acting under the mistaken assumption that precedents were entitled to some weight in matters of such magnitude, the tax-payers caused themselves to be represented by special counsel at the usual time and place for holding special term; but Judge Cardozo, in view probably of the importance of the interests involved, and to prevent all awkward impertinences, saw fit to hold a private special term at an unusual hour, during which, simply upon the motion of the corporation counsel, and without consultation with or hearing the tax-payers, he appointed Thomas Murphy, Charles E. Cornell, and James S. Hennessy commissioners, the first two of whom were subsequently replaced by John Q. Jones and William Hood. Shortly after the commissioners had entered upon the discharge of their duties, a remarkably brisk speculation sprang up in the property upon the value of which they were to pass. The inside members and outside familiars of the Ring suddenly began to purchase. The result showed that they had not acted unadvisedly. Two of them, for instance, paid \$24,500 for a single lot near Fifty-third Street; they were awarded by the commissioners damages to the amount of \$25,100, and retained a front on the new line worth \$10,000 more. For the adjacent lot also the same men paid \$27,500, and here they were awarded \$30,355, besides retaining another valuable front on Broadway. In another case certain persons, combining their capital, bought eight lots between Fifty-first and

Fifty-second Streets, and five street lots in the rear, paying therefor \$350,000; they were awarded \$34,826, cash, while they retained a front worth alone at least \$300,000, upon a similar valuation, besides the five rear lots which were thus made to cost them but \$3,000 each. Again, one person paid the astonishing price of \$28,000 for a single lot on the northwest corner of Broadway and Fifty-second Street; but the commissioners awarded him \$40,380, leaving him, beside, a front on Broadway worth thousands more. For a piece of land measuring only twenty-five feet by twenty-three, one man received \$16,120; while another, for a lot manifestly worth fully as much, received only \$7,625. The difference between the last two awards exactly measured the difference at the time in question between being and not being a friend of the present exile of Blackwell's Island. Under the decisions of the commissioners, the city had to pay the sum of \$2,888,932.33 for portions of about two hundred different lots, making a total of about fifty-five entire lots in all, at an average price of over \$50,000 each, while three years before \$10,000 apiece for these lots would have been considered a wild overestimate. The amount appropriated for the benefit of the well-informed through the agency of this improvement would hardly fall short of \$1,000,000. At the same time the process of depletion, by means of awards under which the city was compelled to pay nearly \$3,000,000 for improving a mile and a quarter of street before a stroke of work was done upon it, was but a part of the process. Having labored thus far, the commissioners now proceeded to apportion the burden of damages, and this they did with an injustice so scandalous as to be fairly incredible. Under the law one third of this tax was to be assessed upon the city at large, and the remaining two thirds upon the tax-payers, in proportion to the benefit derived by them from the improvement. It could not but be perfectly apparent that no properties had been benefited at all in the same degree as the eight lots on the east side of Broadway lying between Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth Streets, which Peter B. Sweeny and Hugh Smith had purchased in January, 1869, paying therefor the sum of \$700,000. Some distance farther up town, between Fifty seventh and Fifty-eighth Streets,

were eight similar lots benefited it may be two thirds as much as the others ; these lots, however, belonged to the estate of a man who had gone where the wicked cease from troubling, and where it is believed that Rings are unknown. There is now no means of deciding whether the commissioners were influenced by this consideration, or whether they had in mind the adage that a living dog is better than a dead lion ; in any case, without passing upon the attributes of the deceased, they bore evidence to a consciousness of Mr. Sweeny's existence by assessing his very valuable estate in the small sum of \$6,439 ; while the other property, worth less than half as much, was mulcted in the handsome amount of \$17,254. The commissioners made a report which was, of course, confirmed by the Supreme Court at special term. Subsequently to the filing of the report the city was assessed for benefits in the sum of \$3,682,384, instead of the original award of \$2,044,515,—a confessedly illegal increase. The commissioners also reduced the award for damages to the city from \$454,398 to the magnificent amount of \$45.

In this transaction, the whole method of the Ring economists, as respects the private advantages incident to public improvements, was very perfectly illustrated. They simply played with loaded dice. Thoroughly informed as to every projected alteration, they appeared in the market as purchasers ; as such they were sure to win, just as the holder of the property was sure to lose. Their confederates sat in the seats of the judges. If they held the property, the benefit received by it became hard to discover, while the damage it sustained was correspondingly magnified ; if, on the contrary, their negotiations for its purchase had failed, then the obdurate holder was made to realize the great fact that city improvements are expensive luxuries.

The street-opening commission was the engine by means of which this ingenious machinery of political extortion was set in motion ; and the system of these commissions naturally proved, in the hands of the Ring, one of the most abominable of their multifarious devices for the perpetration of fraud. The entire space devoted to the present paper might well be filled with examples of this class of outrage, but it seems only

necessary to sketch the odious outlines of the system. The great majority of those appointed on these commissions were in intimate relations with the members of the Ring, and were appointed by its Judges, Barnard and Cardozo; the same individuals were thus designated as commissioners in many different proceedings; and, not infrequently, they were interested in the very openings and extensions upon which they were called as commissioners to adjudicate. They were usually appointed upon the suggestion of Corporation Counsel O'Gorman, by the Ring judges, and invariably without argument. The amount of the awards was often entirely disproportioned to the sum of the assessments, while the charges for costs and expenses of the commissioners ranged usually from ten to one hundred times as much as the law allowed, and this, too, in utter disregard of the fact that the commissioners not infrequently were disqualified from receiving any pay as such, they being already in the employ of the city. Lastly, they are believed to have systematically caused unnecessary delays in order to swell the bill of their costs. Gratz Nathan — Cardozo's "Gratz" — acted as commissioner in five different street openings and widenings; Edward Connolly was also appointed street-opener in five separate cases, James S. Hennessy in three, James Bagley in four, and James Moore in four; while Henry A. Smith, Gershon Cohen, T. J. Creamer, and Henry M. Garvin acted in two or more each. Among the scores of other persons who shared in these profitable transactions were the following with names notably familiar in city politics, — Hugh Smith, James M. Sweeny, Peter B. Sweeny, Wm. M. Tweed, Jr., Richard M. Tweed, Michael Norton, A. J. Fullerton, Thomas Coman, Robert Sutherland, James H. Coleman, Thomas J. Barr, and E. A. Woodward.

As a relic of Ring rule in this department, there were lately pending forty-five different undertakings, involving improvements and street assessments, all of wise conception for the development of the city, but nearly every one of them mismanaged, if not indeed fraudulently conducted. In the matter of the Broadway widening, Judge Sutherland cut down the expenses and costs of the commission which had the matter in charge from \$132,000 to about \$55,000; thus indicat-

ing the amount of something very like fraud which, in the judgment of the magistrate, that body attempted to perpetrate. The files of abstracts and reports at the Board of Public Works show charges in certain cases of \$176,398, where the legal dues of the commission were only \$20,272. Where \$10 a lot was formerly the fee for opening streets, from \$40 to \$100 was now demanded, and \$10,000 has been charged on this account for distances not exceeding ten blocks in length. For widening Broome Street, Gratz Nathan and his associate commissioners extorted \$3,600, though their legal fees should not have exceeded \$37.50. From 1868 to 1873 a million and a half dollars were expended for services of this description, for which \$300,000 would have been an ample allowance.

But it was not alone in the opening of new streets and in the widening of old ones that the city fathers found scope for their lucre-getting proclivities. Many millions of public money were also squandered to great private emolument in payment for worthless pavements. These were mostly composed of concrete, and among them the "Fisk poultice," as it was popularly called, enjoyed an especially bad prominence, which was probably due to the fact that Tweed's son was a stockholder in the company which owned it. This ingenious compound was so bad that it was indicted by the grand jury as a public nuisance. The concrete pavements laid on the streets of the city since 1868 have nevertheless cost \$524,637.56, and those on the parks \$82,427.56 more, or \$607,085.12 in all. For wooden pavements over two millions have been expended during the same period. Both descriptions required constant repairs, and soon wore out, being replaced, in many instances, by stone, which is both cheaper and also far more durable.

To describe in detail the numerous money-getting projects which were devised by the prolific ingenuity of Tweed and his associates would far transcend all reasonable space, and would, after all, prove but a wearisome tale of corruption. In examining the sickening record a sense of amazement and even admiration is excited at the imperial scale upon which everything was designed; the magnificence of such thievery

goes far to extinguish a sense of its baseness. Schemes were concocted which would have required years for their complete development, and which revealed a foresight worthy of nobler aims. Huge establishments were constructed for the manufacture of every article needed in any quantity for city use; or arrangements were perfected with those who already enjoyed special facilities in the production of such articles, so that they might reach the city only through the agency of the ubiquitous Ring. The New York Printing Company, both in its inception and development, was perhaps the most remarkable undertaking of this description, and deserves a more detailed notice. It was the outgrowth of the "Transcript" Company, which had been formed during the war, for the purpose of publishing an official record of the courts. Organs of this class, as is well known, can, under proper manipulation, be made very profitable; and Tweed while school commissioner had tried, without success, to have a paper recognized as the organ of the Board of Education. The "Leader" was now thriving vigorously on the corporation patronage, and an excellent opening seemed to offer for an official journal. Three persons were interested at first in the "Transcript," and they had subscribed to it the enormous capital of \$ 250. Their names were George Stout, a journalist unknown to fame; Charles E. Wilbour, a court stenographer and literary man, somewhat less unknown; and Cornelius Corson, an employee in the City Hall, and not devoid of influence in that quarter. Though the "Transcript" had an insignificant circulation, it was made the receptacle for large amounts of corporation advertising, which increased wonderfully when at length Tweed became a partner in the concern. At the time of the enlistment of volunteers, during the Rebellion, the Common Council of the city ordered that a full list of all persons liable to serve in the army, amounting to some fifty thousand names, should be printed in the "Transcript." This list was afterwards published in a volume, on which composition was charged at the highest newspaper rates; of this valuable compilation thirty-five copies were actually printed, though the bill was rendered for a large edition. This was the turning-point in the fortunes of the "Transcript" firm, and led in time to the organ-

ization of the New York Printing Company, and its associate stationery department. The colossal enterprise known by this name contained more presses and controlled more material than any other two similar establishments in the country. Its proprietors, among whom Tweed was most prominent, aimed at nothing less than at doing all the printing and supplying all the stationery, first for the New York City government, afterwards for the State Legislature and government; and finally they cast greedy eyes upon Washington itself. To accomplish this colossal scheme, no pains or expense were spared. The most approved printing-presses and material were obtained, the best workmen and most skilful managers were secured by offers of high pay, leading paper manufacturers were invited to make contracts for their whole product, and the company was then prepared to execute the finest work ever done in the country. It obtained the lion's share of the corporation supplies, for which bills were paid to the enormous amount of \$1,673,880. It also did its printing for the Erie Railway Co., and executed large private and commercial orders. In the years 1869 and 1870 alone there was paid to the Printing Company, the Stationers' Company, and the "Transcript" nearly three millions of public money, of which nine tenths was profit, if we may judge by the usual average of the Ring transactions.

But street-openings, commissionerships, pavements, official advertising and printing companies — all forms of jobbery and embezzlement, whether direct or indirect — paled their feeble fires and shrunk into insignificance in presence of the last great colossal swindle which now remains to be described. The history of the new Court House in New York City may truly be said to mark an epoch in the splendid record of municipal frauds; beside all others it is "as Ossa to a wart." Though planned in 1868 and stipulated to cost not over \$250,000, the total outlay upon this edifice up to 1871 exceeded eight millions; it has swallowed up four times the amount expended in constructing the Parliament House in London, and it is still unfinished. It now stands on one of the most conspicuous sites of the continent, an architectural abomination, far more suggestive of an ancient ruin than of a

new, unfinished structure.* The marble of which it is built is of an inferior quality, the product of a quarry in Berkshire County belonging to the Ring. Already discolored by the weather, it looks rusty and dingy. The interior has the aspect of a huge unsightly barn. The corridors are dark and gloomy; the court-rooms are badly ventilated. The furniture and carpets are in keeping with the outside of the building, being in many cases unmistakably shabby. One of the largest rooms has no floor-covering whatever, while several others have oil-cloths or mattings. Yet the building is now historic and already rich in associations. It irresistibly recalls to memory the corruption incident to its building, and the many striking episodes which have taken place within its walls. Here Barnard and Cardozo held court, while one of the rooms in which they travestied justice was appropriately adorned with a life-size portrait of William Marcy Tweed. Close by is the now famous

* It is unnecessary to repeat what has been so often said about the extravagant scale of the work done on the new Court House. It will suffice to give the total expenditure for the different kinds of work performed.

RECAPITULATION.

Court House, —

Carpenter work and timber	\$ 1,439,619.03
Furniture	1,575,782.96
Carpets, shades, and curtains	675,534.44
Plastering work	531,594.22
Painting and decorating	319,539.85
Plumbing and gas work	750,313.37
Iron work	132,564.90
Safes	404,347.72
Awnings	41,746.83
Articles (probably brooms, etc.)	41,190.95
Marble for work in progress	77,498.25
Pay roll of " "	22,709.35
Superintendence of building	29,427.34
Thermometers	7,500.00
Locks	2,676.75
	<hr/>
	\$ 6,052,045.96
Repairs on wood work	750,071.92
Repairs on plaster work	1,294,684.13
Repairs on plumbing work	51,461.75
Repairs not defined	75,716.13
	<hr/>
	\$ 2,171,933.93

Room 13, where the corrupt judges were in the habit of consulting together, and not far off was the private office in which Sweeny was wont to spin his web of intrigue after conference with Hall and the other familiars of the Ring. Here also is the Comptroller's Department, with the desk at which Watson sat. Here the naturalization frauds were consummated, and the theft of the vouchers perpetrated. Many notable trials also have taken place in the new Court House, in which famous advocates have appeared. The interminable Jumell will case was here fought over; Daniel McFarland was here acquitted after the murder of Albert D. Richardson, and Edward S. Stokes was convicted of the killing of James Fisk, Jr. Hall's several arraignments took place in this building, as did also Tweed's double trial, conviction, and sentence. A volume might well be filled with the associations which cluster about the building, but which are unhappily too often connected with deeds of unpunished violence and of unconvicted fraud,—deeds suggestive rather of the memory of the Old Bailey than of the fame of Westminster Hall.

The need of such a building as the new Court House had long been felt, and it was planned on a liberal scale. It was designed by Kellum, and completed under the architect's personal direction. His share at least of the work was well done, and he protested against the use of inferior material, but without avail. The building had been begun some years prior to the Ring's accession to complete power, and its members had not been able to interfere with its construction. In contracting for the work of finishing and furnishing it, however, they made up for the lost opportunity, and fairly outdid themselves in the lavishness of their corruption. Up to 1869 four and a half millions had been appropriated for the main structure,—a sum almost double this in amount was expended in the process of completion and furnishing. This simple statement includes both an indictment and conviction of fraud. The work was apportioned among several contractors, nearly every one of whom had previously been employed for the city under the auspices of the Ring. Their names are now almost household words. The frescoing and interior decoration was allotted to Andrew J. Garvey; the contracts

for furniture were given to Ingersoll; Keyser executed the plumbing; McBride Davidson furnished the safes; one Smith supplied awnings; and other individuals did smaller portions of the work.

Of these men, Andrew J. Garvey incurred special opprobrium after the "Times" published the Court House accounts. It is perhaps useless now to attempt to exculpate him, and yet he seems to have received somewhat hard measure. He has become a name, — almost a proverb. He is generally referred to as if he were a common plasterer, but in reality his business was that of an interior decorator, which he had followed for nearly thirty years, first with his father and subsequently on his own account. In his peculiar line of work he was thought to be without a superior, and the decorations in many private houses and a number of public buildings, including Vassar College, had been executed by him. He had especial facilities for undertaking the work on the Court House, and he obtained the contract through the influence of the architect, and against Tweed's own wishes. His work, moreover, seems to have been fairly done.

James H. Ingersoll was a young man of pleasant manners and of good social position. In business he was associated with his father, an old friend of Tweed's, who had in some way been connected with him in the furniture business. The two were very intimate, and Tweed employed the younger Ingersoll in various manipulations of armory leases, and other like civic operations in which he was wont to dabble, greatly to their joint advantage. Through Tweed's influence Ingersoll obtained numerous city contracts and gradually acquired very considerable worldly possessions.

Keyser was a business man of character and standing. He contracted for the plumbing for the new Court House, in so far as can be ascertained in good faith and as a legitimate transaction. In the sequel, however, he furnished an additional illustration of the ancient adage in regard to the results of evil communications, for he had not the courage to refuse to connive at the frauds perpetrated by Tweed and Watson. In due time, having thus meddled with pitch, he too became defiled, and, beside suffering loss of reputation through his relations to

the Ring, he was forced to pay black-mail in the form of personal loans to the amount of several thousand dollars to a member of Tweed's family.

McBride Davidson was in all respects a contemptible parasite of the Ring. His office, so called, was in Duane Street, and behind it was a room containing, in the delicate phraseology peculiar to the new Court House, "all the accompaniments of sociability," — in more common parlance, he kept a private bar much frequented by certain of the rulers and judges of the people. This fortunate gentleman received half a million dollars of the city's money for supplying it with safes, the quality of which in no way corresponded with their cost.

Archibald Hall was proprietor of an insignificant paint-shop in a side street in New York, but in his case the advantage of a connection at court received a pointed illustration; for, through the influence of his brother, who was secretary of the Americus Club, clerk of the Tombs Police Court, and the prosperous holder of several other sinecures, he obtained contracts for painting to the extent of a quarter of a million of dollars. Mr. James W. Smith furnished awnings for the Court House at \$150 each, which would have yielded him a handsome profit at the more modest sum of \$12.50.

Not all of these highly favored frequenters of the City Hall were satisfied with direct contracts. Ingersoll, for example, besides taking his own, farmed out others which he had likewise secured through the same influences; and in no case did he forget to exact his commission from his sub-contractors. Among these was one George S. Miller, who performed such an enormous amount of carpenter-work, that his bills for a single month in 1870 amounted to a third of a million of dollars. As the Court House was constructed almost wholly of iron and stone, the expenditure of a million and a half of dollars on account of timber and carpenter-work might under other circumstances have seemed to invite explanation.

As Mr. George S. Miller was Ingersoll's carpenter, so Mr. J. A. Smith was his carpet and shade dealer. Persons of the name of Smith are not uncommon in any vocation; but no one calling himself Mr. J. A. Smith was, anterior to this time,

known to the carpet trade in New York as being engaged in that business. Mr. Ingersoll, however, certainly appointed Mr. J. A. Smith purveyor-general of carpets to the city of New York, and as such in the brief space of two years he presented bills to the amount of three fourths of a million of dollars, and was paid that sum from the treasury. In the same way a number of other payments were made to individuals of uncertain identity, or to persons who had nothing whatever to do with the work paid for. Among these was a Mr. A. G. Miller, in whose name over half a million of dollars was extracted from the treasury. Now as Mr. George S. Miller was Ingersoll's carpenter-in-chief, and Mr. J. A. Smith was his purveyor-general of carpets, so Mr. A. G. Miller might, perhaps, best be described as a member of that gentleman's business family, unassigned. Garvey also had several of these convenient men of straw attached to his person, two of whom, Messrs. T. C. Cashman and R. A. Hennessy, were workmen in his employ; and in their case it does not even appear that before using their names he went through the form of asking their permission so to do.

The loud outcry subsequently raised against the Court House contractors was not in every case wholly deserved. Of course, judged by any, even the lowest, moral standard, they connived at fraud and were not honest men; but, after all, some of them were more weak than wicked; they were tools, it is true, but as such they did but what all others did, and they not infrequently did it under a stress of strong necessity. So far as can be ascertained, every person having dealings with the city at this time was regularly levied upon in behalf of the Ring. Some of them made no objection to the fraud, while others resisted for a space. The position was; however, not an easy one. They employed many men, and had heavy payments to make which they could not meet if payment of their claims was refused. Under these circumstances all that followed was almost matter of course.

The fraud, it is unnecessary to say, was of the most unblushing description, and was perpetrated with a brutal directness which scarcely needs to be described. In addition to their actual charges, however excessive they might be, each contractor

was instructed to add a large percentage to his bills, which was deducted and divided among the members of the Ring. This practice first came in vogue and was systematically enforced in the contracts for Court House work. Under the system previously in use, money had been extorted from contractors in the shape of commissions or loans, but usually by Tweed alone; afterward Connolly insisted upon having a share of the plunder. Next Watson, who audited the accounts, had to be satisfied, together with Woodward, who acted as go-between; and thus the circle rapidly widened, until each member of the Ring was provided for with his share of the blood-money. Garvey states that it was in 1867 that he was informed by Tweed that he must pay the latter fifteen per cent on his bills against the city before his vouchers would be approved: This sum Garvey asserts that he paid from his own pocket, while it was the first and only fraudulent bill to the correctness of which he made affidavit. Subsequently he regularly added the amount of the percentage to his bills, and charged the city with the whole. Garvey's description of that first payment, as given in his testimony on the trial of Tweed, has historical interest as well as dramatic effect. It reads as follows:—

“I did some work on this Court House in 1867. When I commenced the building, I asked Tweed how to make out the bills, and he said, ‘Have fifteen per cent over.’ I asked what that was for, and he said, ‘Give that to me, and I will take care of your bills.’ I handed him the percentage after that. On one occasion, the second, I think, in handing the bill to him, through my awkwardness it fell on the floor, and he put his foot on it, at the same time looking around to see if anybody was watching; he then took it up and put it in his pocket. Afterwards he met me in the anteroom, and said, ‘If you have anything to give me, give it to me now.’ I gave it to him, and he then told me, in future, to fix things with Woodward; and from that time forward I did.”

The whole method of procedure in perpetrating the Court House frauds is here sufficiently described. Nothing more simple could have been devised through the insight of highest genius. Tweed, in his capacity as Street Commissioner, directed the work to be done. By his influence in the Board of Supervisors, he then had the bills, as presented, passed by that

body. These bills were then carried to the Auditor, Watson, who approved them. The approved warrants were then handed to Woodward, who presented them at the Broadway Bank, received the money and divided it, giving to the contractor his share, and to each member of the Ring the percentage allotted to him. The explanation offered on Tweed's trial for these transactions was equally simple. It was, that to enable them to carry on their business he had advanced the sums placed to his account in the Broadway Bank to Ingersoll, Garvey, and others, and that these advances had been reimbursed to him, through Woodward, as fast as Watson audited the claims. In all the transactions with Garvey, Ingersoll, Keyser, and the other contractors, Watson, the City Auditor, was thus the representative of the Ring, and as such, in this society of thieves, grave responsibility devolved upon him. It behooved him to be an honorable man. We first get a glimpse of Watson as engaged in New York City, with his brother, in the provision business, about the year 1850. They were agents for a large firm in Montreal, and for a time they prospered. Presently, however, they too had losses, and, finding it wholly inconvenient to account to their creditors, Watson fled to California, whence in due time he was brought back to New York in irons, and lodged in Ludlow Street Jail. Being a man of active turn of mind and of ingratiating manners, to while away the weary hours of his confinement he offered to keep certain of the prison records; and this he did with such neatness and despatch that he won the favor of the warden, who in time procured his discharge. Then began the queer upward course, through the devious mazes of municipal affairs, which has so frequently led its daring children from the doors of the New York City jails to those of its City Hall. After his discharge from prison, Watson was taken into the sheriff's office and employed as collector. This post he retained under Sheriffs Orser, Willett, and Kelly, performing his duties so well as to gain the entire confidence of his superiors. He was finally appointed City Auditor, upon the recommendation of Mr. Kelly, who found him in the sheriff's office and was uninformed as to the facts of his previous career and imprisonment. When Connolly succeeded Brennan as Comptroller,

Watson retained his position through the influence of Tweed and Sweeney.

The duties of the auditorship are comparatively unimportant, as is apparent from the amount of the salary affixed to the office, then only \$1,500. Watson, however, was in a position as auditor in which he could not fail to be cognizant of any frauds in bills against the city. It was therefore necessary for the Ring to interest him in their operations. Accordingly in due time he was installed in it as a member in full and regular standing. To Watson and Woodward was intrusted the dirtier work, and it could hardly have found its way into more appropriate hands. For at this time it was the policy of Tweed and the other principals rather to keep behind the scenes: they rarely appeared in public together, and affected toward their tools an apparent ignorance of detail, thus imparting to their operations a certain dread atmosphere of mystery. If Garvey or any of his fellow-contractors asked their intercession to secure the payment of bills, they were referred to Watson, or, in the intimate and significant phraseology of the Ring, the answer was, "You must do just as Jimmy tells you, and you will get your money." This was the total of their redress. "Jimmy," on his part, assumed great additional dignity as the representative of the civic dignitaries, and exacted his own terms from every claimant. The degree of confidence reposed in him by the confederated plunderers may be inferred from the extent to which they recorded their accessions of real estate and other property in his name.

Watson's proportion of the booty was large, and he soon became rich. He, however, took pains to conceal his prosperity, avoiding display in his manner of living and cultivating a general belief that he was only in comfortable circumstances. His method of doing this was characteristic of municipal tone; he would, for instance, visit some gambling establishment, and, after losing an insignificant sum, he would stop playing, on the ground that his salary would not allow him to stake more. Considering the modest amount of this salary, however, he indulged in some expensive tastes, among which was one for horse-flesh. He owned several quite noted trotters, and it was while driving in Harlem Lane that the accident occurred which

resulted in his death. There was little about him that was attractive, though he was natty in appearance and always dressed with extreme neatness. His manner was smooth, but indicative of an offensive degree of self-satisfaction as well as of assurance. The promptitude and directness of his method of at once doing the city's business and protecting the interests of his confederates may be inferred from the following anecdote. A visitor at his office, who knew the inside working of affairs, while waiting one day for his turn to be attended to, saw one of the Ring contractors engaged in conversation with Watson. They spoke in low tones, but from their pantomimic gestures the observer rightly conjectured that the contractor was asking, first quietly, and then with importunity, for the payment of some account due him. Watson said little, but, taking a scrap of paper, he made an estimate of the percentage to be deducted for himself and the rest of the Ring; the contractor read the figures with evident dismay and expostulated with the utmost energy, but in vain. After a long argument he was forced to agree to the proposition. Watson then carefully took the piece of paper, tore it into fine pieces, which he threw into the wastebasket, and then proceeded to draw up a check for the balance agreed upon.

Woodward, whose name appears in such close connection with Watson, like so many others, owed his prominence to family connection with those near the court; he was the brother-in-law of Joseph B. Young, clerk of the Board of Supervisors. He was what is currently known as "a smart young man of affable manners," and at one period he took a lively interest in prayer-meetings and church-going, and was an earnest exhorter on these occasions, with a close imitation of the priestly demeanor. When upon business bent he usually drove over with Garvey or one of the other contractors in a private coupé to the Broadway Bank; there he drew the money on the city warrants in thousand-dollar bills, preferring notes of that denomination for the greater facility they afforded of ready division. He never paid a contractor in the bank, but, on their return from it, he would hand over to him his share of the payment in the Court House or on the steps of the City Hall. Woodward effected these divisions before twelve o'clock on Sat-

urdays, so that he had time to catch the three-o'clock train to his country place. He would often invite Garvey to drive to the depot with him, and at such times the two would very frankly discuss business topics. On one of these occasions Garvey was fearful, and nervously inquired of Woodward if he did not apprehend that their frauds were becoming rather brazen in character. The latter, however, philosophically replied, "Let the others cover up and hide matters for themselves; that's not my lookout. I've got my pile."

Naturally where so much work was done, it was not always easy to discriminate for whom it was done; so to obviate any question on these insignificant details, Garvey and the other Ring contractors were in the custom of presenting to the city authorities bills for work performed on account of the different members of the Ring and their familiars. Tweed in this way effected large private economies upon his house on Fifth Avenue and his country place at Greenwich. Connolly had a house, stable, and surroundings finished by Garvey, for which seven warrants were presented and paid, to the amount of nineteen thousand dollars. For these expenditures Ingersoll drew the warrants and paid his own checks for their amounts to Garvey, but the orders for the work were given by Watson. Barnard also had his house frescoed by Garvey at the city's expense; while Genet had his house and stable built by the contractor who erected the Harlem Court House at the cost of \$125,000. In addition to personal favors of this nature, McBride Davidson presented a number of individuals with his safes, naturally charging the same to the city; this last proceeding was, however, in view of the rapid accumulation of private assets which has been described as then in progress, an act of kindly thoughtfulness on the part of Mr. Davidson, which partook almost of the character of satire.

In recounting this strange history the enumeration of frauds becomes fairly monotonous. It is, however, necessary to dwell upon them in detail, that a thorough idea may be conveyed of the all-pervading nature of the operations of these men. It may safely be asserted that no set of thieves in recorded history ever had so large a field, or ever more thor-

oughly exploited any field. They were like successful miners developing some rich mineral district, — in whatever direction they turned they struck upon new leads of surprising yield. These the different members of the Ring followed up with a patient and insatiable assiduity. While Tweed, for instance, absorbed the chief profits from the Street Commissioners' work, Connolly devoted his attention to other and scarcely less remunerative sources of revenue. One of the most profitable of these was the public markets, in two of which alone the stand-owners were defrauded to the extent of half a million of dollars. This wheel within a wheel, known as the "Market Ring," was headed by Superintendents Carroll and Feore, two appointees of Connolly. Feore subsequently acknowledged that he paid \$8,000 to secure his appointment; and when charged with making \$50,000, he said that he had to pay money continually to several persons, among whom were Senators Genet, to whom he owed his appointment, Michael Norton, James O'Brien, and others, and that consequently he only netted \$30,000 out of the position. As Feore was superintendent only eighteen months, at an annual salary of \$2,000, some idea may be formed of what the frauds must have been when during that time his share of the plunder reached \$30,000. Sums ranging from \$100 to \$500 were demanded for the privilege of rebuilding or transferring, reaching a total of over \$200,000. The methods of procedure were varied and ingenious. The owner of a stand would suddenly find his premises in possession of another person who would present a permit signed by the Comptroller, by virtue of which he would claim legitimate possession, and refuse to remove except upon the payment of money. A no less sum than \$40,000 was collected from the stand-holders by the superintendent for roofing the markets, and was divided between himself and Connolly; while upon the Comptroller's books there also appears a similar charge which was paid by the city, the whole of which was apparently pocketed by that official. Not one penny of the half-million dollars of which the stand-owners were defrauded went into the city treasury, and only \$800 of the amount was properly assessed. It may also further be mentioned that only about one third of the fees charged to the market-men were ever accounted for by the Comptroller.

While every other department of the city government was made tributary to the Ring, naturally the school system did not escape its greedy and restless eyes. In every point of view here was a rich field for plunder; and not only was it rich in direct plunder, but it supplied, as will be seen, a ready means of bribing large classes of voters to the support of the Ring, without imposing any pecuniary sacrifices upon its members. From a piratical point of view the value of this prize may be estimated from the following statistics. For the year 1869, \$3,150,000 was appropriated for the support of the New York City common schools. There were 117 of these schools in all, with 2,411 teachers, 98 janitors, 110 trustees, 21 inspectors of schools, and some 50 other officials. Nearly \$2,000,000 was annually spent in salaries, while the remaining million and more was expended in buildings, building-sites, rent, fuel, gas, and miscellaneous supplies and expenses.

Early in 1869 it became very apparent that a concerted movement was to be made towards securing the control of the Board of Education, the only department of the city government which the Ring did not already possess. Several attempts had previously been made to elect school commissioners who would prove convenient tools, but through the activity of the friends of the schools these had hitherto been foiled. The commissioners were then invited to yield a portion of the patronage under their control; and it was also urged that the teachers should be assessed for political purposes. These encroachments were stoutly resisted by the president of the Board, Mr. James McLean, a fearless and independent man, who was well sustained by Mr. S. B. H. Vance, chairman of its finance committee, and by Mr. Thomas Boesé, its secretary. Through their untiring efforts every assault upon the department was for the time defeated. The members of the Ring were not accustomed to such resistance, and they vented their disappointment by assailing Mr. Boesé in every possible way. The Board was alternately coaxed and threatened to bring about the secretary's removal, but without success. Sweeny evinced an especial interest in the matter, owing, it is said, to the refusal of the Board to retain an incompetent female teacher, who had in some way succeeded in enlisting the all-powerful manipu-

lator in her behalf, and he now made a personal issue upon the question of the dismissal of the secretary. The contest stretched through months and even years, for its inception dated as far back as 1867. The newspapers finally took up the cudgels; those in the service of the Ring abused Mr. Boesé without stint, while he was warmly defended by the "Times," the "Evening Post," the "World," and "Harper's Weekly."

The first of those cartoons by Thomas Nast, which subsequently proved so formidable a weapon in the final struggle against the Ring, appeared in connection with this school fight. Sweeny soon had recourse to his usual tactics, and, having failed to capture the existing Board, he undertook to legislate its members out of office. Accordingly, when the Legislature of 1869 assembled, a bill was prepared calculated to effect that result. As usual, the proposed measure was most ingenious in its outer aspect. A new Board was to be substituted for the existing one, to consist of twelve members, five of whom were to be Republicans and the rest Democrats; while it was provided that no appropriations should be passed, except by a two-thirds vote. Several distinguished citizens were named as possible members of the new body, but only with a laudable view to the deception of an innocent public. In spite of its plausible exterior, the true character of the measure was altogether too apparent, and it rested long on the legislative files in a state of suspended animation. Meantime the draft of another bill was submitted to Mr. Boesé and others connected with the schools, and assurances were given that if they would advocate its passage all further hostilities towards either the existing Board or its secretary should cease. The new bill, which was offered by Tweed in the Senate, provided for a division of the school funds of the whole State among all free schools having above two hundred pupils, without distinction as to sect; or, in other words, it was framed to place Catholic and other sectarian institutions for instruction upon the same basis as the common schools. Mr. Boesé and his coadjutors positively refused to support this measure, which struck indeed at the very root of the educational system of the State, and such an outcry was raised by the press that the bill was qui-

etly suffered to die in committee. The contest for the possession of the New York City School Department was then resumed with increased bitterness. Finally, by the aid of the Republican members of the Legislature, Sweeny's original bill was passed, and the appointment of the new school commissioners was placed in the hands of the Mayor. The existence of the old Board was thus terminated. Just previous to the passage of this act a majority of the commissioners, including the new president, Richard H. Larremore, elected in 1869, began to waver. Hitherto they had stood firmly by their secretary, but they now stated to him that they had the assurance of both Sweeny and Hall that, if Mr. Boesé would resign, the remainder of the Board should not be disturbed. They further intimated that they had suffered politically as much as they could bear on behalf of the secretary, and that he must now submit to be sacrificed. Mr. Boesé, being thus left with but a minority of supporters in the Board, tendered his resignation in a letter which contained the following biting language:—

“As is well known to most of your number, I was compelled, in the proper performance of my duties as clerk of the Board, to incur the displeasure of those who are the reputed controllers of the political affairs of this city. This led, as you are aware, to a demand on their part that I should be removed from my official position. Your refusal to accede to this demand has, as alleged, resulted in an attack upon the reputation of the Board of Education, and in an attempt to subject most of its members to a political ostracism which the majority have not felt themselves called upon to bear, and to which I certainly do not desire any of them to submit on my account, although you all know that it was sought to punish me for refusing to obey mandates that would have degraded the schools and those who controlled them. I should consider myself poor indeed if I could not suffer under such circumstances.”

The resignation thus tendered was accepted by a vote of fifteen to four, and a resolution thanking Mr. Boesé “for his unwearied industry, strict integrity, and earnest efforts in the course of public education” was unanimously adopted by the Board.

A more humiliating illustration of the power of the Ring,

and of the deplorable weakness of the respectable citizens of New York, could hardly be furnished, than was implied in this admission of the majority of the Board that they dared not support their official representative in the performance of his duty, though he was qualified by eighteen years' connection with the schools to administer his office, and by their own indorsement was a competent and honest official. It is matter of gratification, however, that even this extraordinary self-stultification did not save the old school commissioners. In spite of the promises of Sweeny and Hall, they were in due time superseded by a new Board appointed by the Mayor, and consequently mainly composed of willing tools of the Ring. The effect on the character of the schools which was naturally to be anticipated soon began to follow, and a steady deterioration, as will hereafter be seen, set in.

The attack upon the Board of Education and the triumph over Mr. Boesé was more especially the work of Mr. Peter B. Sweeny. Throughout it was characterized by his peculiar style of tactics, which partook neither of the direct brutality of Tweed, nor of the mean cunning of Connolly. In fact, the art of stealing was carried to perfection by each of these men, but always in the style of each. Tweed indulged in the grandiose and flagrant; Connolly was addicted to the sneaking and, except in their results, the petty methods; while Sweeny was always inclined to what was plausible and specious. The first gloried in all the prominence of the Court House frauds; the second batten on the pickings of the markets; while the last delighted in stalking his prey under the cover of legality, and in this way actually acquired illicit wealth while cultivating a reputation for a disinterested public spirit. During the summer of 1869 he was absent in Europe, and it is said paid a visit to Napoleon III., then Emperor. Just prior to his departure, however, he made a great display of what his admirers were pleased to call an "unexampled official magnanimity," by abandoning all claim to the interest on the city deposits, which his predecessor, Chamberlain Devlin, had, without any legal authority, appropriated to his own use. The office of chamberlain was in New York City identical with that of county treasurer; for the city and county of New York are geographically

the same, and it is only in contemplation of law that the two are distinct. Under the fostering care of the Board of Supervisors, however, the salaries of the city officials had been duplicated, through the ingenious device of paying them a second time in the mythical character of county officers.

By the tax levy of 1866 the chamberlain's fees were fixed at \$10,000. In April, 1867, two months after Sweeny's appointment to the office by Mayor Hoffman, a provision of the tax levy of that year provided that, as county treasurer, the chamberlain should also receive an additional salary of \$10,000. The chamberlain is *ex officio* one of the commissioners of the sinking fund, and in that capacity Sweeny obtained another salary of one thousand dollars, or an aggregate of twenty-one thousand dollars per annum. These facts having become public, a change in the law was not unnaturally suggested; but all further discussion on this point was stilled, when Sweeny ostentatiously announced that he proposed thereafter to pay over to the city all surplus profits from interests on the deposits of the city moneys; he, however, reserved the right to make these disbursements at his own pleasure, and did not propose to submit to any form of accountability. Upon what ground of law or of morality the city chamberlain, more than any other public officer or trustee, was justified in appropriating to his own use the interest earned by the public money in his hands is not immediately apparent to ordinary minds; the circumstance that after the death of Chamberlain Devlin, and on the accession to office of Peter B. Sweeny, an action at law was commenced against the executors of the late chamberlain to recover for the city the interest-money which had thus been appropriated during Devlin's term of office, is presumptive proof that no such abuse was recognized. Sweeny, however, acquired great credit on account of his disinterested action in the matter.

In his report for 1867 Comptroller Connolly made mention of this announcement of his confederate, and stated that "the revenues from this source are estimated at upwards of \$100,000 per year." Sweeny's organ, the "Citizen," subsequently claimed that there had been paid over on account of interest-money, during its patron's term of office, \$198,000, or about \$66,000

per annum. As some compensation for such disinterestedness, and perhaps to show that republics are not always ungrateful, at its next session the Legislature interpolated these words into the tax levy of 1868, among the objects for which moneys were to be raised: "The compensation of the county treasurer of the said county shall hereafter be one half of one per cent on all moneys paid out by him in that capacity, but not exceeding ten thousand dollars per annum from the county treasury." Rarely has anything more admirable in its way been penned. To the unsophisticated nature it would seem that ten thousand dollars was to be the limit of the county treasurer's emolument, instead of twenty-one thousand dollars as it then was, and three times twenty-one thousand dollars as it was immediately claimed to be under the construction given to this clause. During the two years 1868, 1869, Chamberlain Sweeny drew from the State Comptroller, in addition to his other salary as county treasurer, the sum of \$83,045.30; and his total income was now therefore \$62,522.65, which, as a meet reward for his "magnanimity" in regard to the interest on city deposits, he was allowed to enjoy in peace. The worst, however, yet remains to be told. The sole service performed by Sweeny, in return for these fees of \$41,522 per annum from the State treasury, was the drawing a check on a New York bank, in favor of the State Comptroller, for the amount of the State taxes collected in the city; a duty for which \$2,000 had theretofore been justly considered a liberal compensation. Thus for five minutes' work once a year, the "magnanimous" Sweeny received a salary more than twice that of the President of the United States. The emoluments of Sweeny's various speculations were estimated by competent authority at \$60,000, in addition to his salaries. Besides his real-estate operations, which were naturally highly remunerative, he was also reputed to be the fortunate proprietor of a liberal interest in the Fisk pavement, and he was moreover a favorite referee of certain of the judges in cases in which the work promised to be light and the fees heavy. Occasionally also he served as a receiver, and one notable instance of this was in the case of the issuing of a large amount of stock by the Erie directors in flat violation of an injunction, during the struggle between that

body and Vanderbilt in 1868. After the stock had been issued and sold, the directors of the corporation had fled to Jersey City, carrying the proceeds of the operation with them. There was absolutely nothing in the case for a receiver to take possession of, nor any duties for him to perform. In a most irregular way, however, Judge Barnard appointed Sweeny to the office, and the rest followed as a matter of course. He was appointed for a purpose, and he accomplished it. The compromise which enabled the exiled Drew to return to Wall Street also secured to the representative of the Ring a fee of \$150,000 for filling during a brief space an office in which not a duty had to be performed. And thus in these various ways the plausible Sweeny gathered in his harvest not less successfully than did the noisy Tweed or the slimy Connolly.

Enough has however been said of the methods through which these men acquired their plunder. It now remains to return to the order of events and to recount the struggles through which for a time they sustained and strengthened themselves in their positions of vantage. For even at first, while the victory of 1868 was still a thing of yesterday, they were made to realize that incessant vigilance was the price of other things besides liberty. Scarcely was the victory of 1868 achieved, before certain of those who had materially contributed to it began to manifest a spirit of discontent at what they were pleased to regard as the insufficient estimate placed upon the value of their services. A revolt was planned against Tweed, Sweeny, and the rest, who had indeed appropriated to themselves even more than the lion's share of the prey. Gradually, sullenly, silently, the discontented ones drew apart and retired to their tents. Prominent among these were James O'Brien, John Morrissey, Senators Norton and Genet, — better known among their associates as "Mike" Norton and "Prince Harry" Genet, — John Fox, Thomas Creamer, Thomas Ledwith, Police Justice Cox, and others equally versed in all the mysteries of city politics. They constituted a choice collection of municipal "strikers," such as might well have figured in the later annals of republican Rome. Prominent among them was James O'Brien, sheriff of the county of New York. He was a young man, scarcely over thirty, whose face no less than

his name betrayed the Irish stock from which he sprung. He was of that Irish-American type, the peculiarities of which are so well understood in American politics. He began life in the streets of New York City, and could boast of little education except what he had derived from that dubious school. For a space he worked as a stone-mason, and was also the foreman of a fire company, but it was not long before he became a ward politician. At one period, for some participation in an election riot, he was sent for a few weeks to Blackwell's Island, under a sentence of Judge George G. Barnard. But the whirligig of time brought its revenges, and O'Brien afterwards, as a member of the Legislature, voted on that magistrate's impeachment. He was twice elected alderman, though bitterly opposed by Sweeny, and in that capacity he proved so strong and so useful to the Ring that a truce was declared, and in due course of time he was made sheriff. He was now rich, and his ambition was fired; he aspired to be nothing less than the rival of Tweed. He was wholly illiterate, but he possessed in a remarkable degree the indescribable quality known as personal magnetism. He was not addicted to the lesser and more sociable vices, for he neither drank nor smoked; nor had he any faculty as a public speaker, and yet, though taciturn, he was exceedingly popular. Had he enjoyed better advantages in early life, he might well have proved a political power. Under the circumstances he developed into a ward politician, and as such was probably neither more nor less corrupt than the majority of his associates.

Senator Norton — better known under various pseudonyms as "Mike," the "Thunderbolt," or "Crow" — was a vulgar, loud-voiced, showy demagogue, resplendent with enormous diamonds, and overflowing with coarse geniality. In the district extending from Canal to Bleecker Streets, and from Broadway west to the Hudson River, one of the worst sections of the city, this man represented a numerous following. His services to the Ring in the election of 1868 were second in importance only to those of O'Brien, but now he too was grown disaffected and had openly quarrelled with Tweed. Of Morrissey it is hardly necessary to speak. His career had been a singularly checkered one. At one time champion of the prize-ring, and

subsequently a member of Congress, an operator in Wall Street, and a professional gambler,—he now dabbled in municipal politics much as he might have done in an exciting game of chance. Ill-treated as he considered himself by both Tweed and Sweeny, he now turned upon the Ring with all the resentment inspired by a sense of personal hatred.

Genet was a grand nephew of that French Minister to the United States whose name is so prominent in the early annals of the republic. He lived at Harlem, and there he enacted the same part which Tweed performed on a larger scale in the neighboring metropolis. Fox controlled the politics of the lower wards of the city, where sailor boarding-houses abounded. Ledwith was a police justice, reputed to be an honest man, and enjoying great popularity among the Catholics. Creamer was a Senator from New York, and joined the movement on a venture. These men, however, did not stand alone. The city government had now fallen into such shameless disrepute, that many respectable citizens had begun to cast about in search of any auxiliaries through whose aid a successful warfare upon it might by any chance be waged. It seemed to such that any change must needs be a change for the better; and accepting that always dangerous creed, that it is permissible to fight the Devil with fire, they now sought to inaugurate a movement of so-called reform through the agency of this newer gang, which had assumed the name of the Young Democracy. Prominent among these was Samuel J. Tilden; and this fact speaks volumes in regard to the political demoralization which had fallen upon the first city in republican America. At first the press of the city viewed the Young Democracy movement with indifference, as being a mere faction fight within the Democratic party. Afterwards, however, the "World" and "Sun" took sides with the faction of discontent in the most energetic manner. The former paper, in particular, was unsparing in its denunciations of the Ring. Referring to the Presidential election of 1868, it spoke of the "shameless and cunning fraud by which such corruptionists of the Ring as William M. Tweed and Oakey Hall had cut down, below its level, the rightful votes of Horatio Seymour," and now it declared "war to the knife, and the knife to the hilt."

The revolt was planned at a secret meeting held on New-Year's day of 1870, at the house of John Morrissey. Creamer, Norton, Genet, O'Brien, McQuade, and Cox were present. Their plans, at first, were wholly defensive, and consisted in little more than simple resistance to further legislation for the benefit of the Ring. It was believed that advantage could be taken of the general dissatisfaction which prevailed in the ranks of the Democracy, and that delegates could be elected to the State Convention which was to be held in September, 1870, who would not prove amenable to Sweeny's dictation, and who would defeat the re-nomination of Hoffman for the Governorship, which was then contemplated. O'Brien's sanguine nature, however, precipitated matters. He revealed the plot, first to one and then to another, until it became public property. A more aggressive policy, therefore, became necessary, and a six months' campaign at large was changed into one of two months in the Legislature. The scene of operations soon shifted, therefore, from the club-rooms of the city to the capital of the State.

Albany is not a large place, and enjoys no great importance except from the fact that it is the capital of New York. When the Legislature is not sitting it is as dull and lifeless as a country town. But during the winter it does not lack animation, though even then most of its activity rests below the surface; for, though the sessions of the Legislature are noisy enough, the real work is done in the committee meetings, in hotel rooms, and in the "lobby." The close proximity of Albany to New York renders it almost a suburb of the latter city, while in some respects the six hours of interval between the two renders the former an even more convenient locality for legislative manipulations than if it were within the limits of Manhattan Island. The active work of legislation is less subject to curious scrutiny; while lobbyist and legislator can confer undisturbed during the passage from the one city to the other. The cars on the Hudson River Railroad at these times present a very animated appearance. They are crowded with passengers who beguile the monotony of the journey by a devotion to cards almost as assiduous as that which once made famous the Western-river steamboats. Many intricate legis-

lative proceedings are discussed and matured during these trips, in the privacy of a drawing-room car. It is a curious circumstance, that not infrequently the same trains which convey these legislative operators to Albany also carry gangs of prisoners to Sing Sing, and there seems good reason to believe that those from whose operations the community has most to fear do not descend at the prison gates.

Legislative corruption has apparently been reduced to a system at Albany. A sufficiency of money only was needed, during the palmy days of the Ring, to carry almost any scheme, no matter how nefarious, through either branch. Ex-Governor Seymour, who had ample opportunity for knowing the facts whereof he spoke, has placed upon record the strong declaration, that "you can scarcely put your finger upon a clean spot at Albany." The venerable art of lobbying has there been elevated into a science, and has become a regular profession, not less recognized, though far less respectable, than law or medicine. It is, moreover, a very lucrative profession; one of its members at Albany is said to be worth \$400,000; while another, in a few years, has accumulated a quarter of a million. The business of these men is to extract money out of legislation, and their methods are no less manifold than their ways are dark: their business lies with corruption. Naturally, if occasion offers, they are not above taking pay from both the friends and opponents of a given measure; while sometimes bills are concocted with no other view than to levy black-mail out of the necessities or fears of some class or corporation. In such cases the lobbyist is the legislative broker. A member introduces the measure, and it is referred to the proper committee. The lobbyist then in due time waits upon the proposed victim, and labors with him on the subject of the threatened law. He generally succeeds in convincing him that, unless a satisfactory sum of money is forthcoming to quietly suppress the bill then slumbering in the committee room, a much larger sum will be required to defeat it in the Legislature. In altogether too many cases the money is paid, and the measure is heard of no more. Among the shrewder and bolder business men of New York this trick of the lobbyist is now well understood and effectively met by a bold policy

of defiance; but this requires an active and vigorous lead, which the lobbyist fully appreciates in advance and rarely cares to encounter. When he does encounter it, his overthrow is apt to be disastrous; and those curious in such subjects can study the whole method both of attack and resistance in these cases in an attempted levy of black-mail upon the Pacific Railroad, in 1872, as recounted by Mr. Horace F. Clark.* As a rule, however, these men understand their business quite as well as burglars; they rarely begin operations unless by careful previous investigations they are well assured that their victims are too numerous and helpless to combine, or unless they have discovered some point which will not bear exposure.

Another and very favorite source of revenue to the lobbyist is the appropriation to his own use of any sums of money which he may have received as a corruption fund. If the measure he is employed to advocate becomes a law, no questions are asked. If, however, it fails to pass, the position of the lobbyist is fairly impregnable, as, with the loftiest possible tone, he then refuses all information as to what use he may have made of the money he has received, upon the ground of a professional etiquette, which seals his lips as to the conduct of those whom he had sought to corrupt. Such methods of procedure, and such a reign of corruption, seem scarcely possible; and yet that they are no matters of fancy has been established, as the result not only of many legislative investigations, but of numerous collateral proceedings in the courts of justice. It is, indeed, only the lowest and most degraded class of legislators who can be bought outright for money down, like cattle in the market, and in most cases among the most venal some degree of circumlocution is necessary. Every shade of corruption was, however, well understood by the city Ring. To one man it was necessary to lend money without being too exacting as to security for repayment. Another individual had to be engaged to perform some trivial service at a price ridiculously disproportionate to its real value. Then, again, enormous sums would be placed at the disposal of certain

* *Credit Mobilier*, Report of Wilson Committee, pp. 410-414.

agents, and no questions were asked as to the disposition made of them. For instance, to one of the most notorious of these anomalous go-betweens sixty thousand dollars was paid by Jay Gould for alleged legal services. This individual has frequently related in public places a ludicrous incident of his experience. An Assemblyman came to his room one day to receive the price of his vote. Before a settlement could be effected a brother legislator, intent on the same errand, knocked at the door. To avoid an awkward meeting the resourceful lobbyist hid the first-comer under his bed, and then admitted the second; who, quite unconscious of being thus overheard, proceeded to discuss the terms of his compensation with edifying candor. It was the old tableau of Joseph Surface and Sir Peter Teazle; but there is no reason to suppose that in this case it led either to the exposure of the seducer, or to any reformation in the manners of his too-willing confidants.

The Ring was most effectively represented in the Legislature of 1869, for Tweed had been elected to the Senate at the same time that Hoffman had been placed in the Governor's chair. He at once took the lead at Albany, and managed both houses in much the same high-handed manner in which he administered the Street Department of the city. The contrast between his attitude in the State Senate now, and in Congress fifteen years before is very striking. At Washington he had been an obscure and unnoticed member wholly devoid of influence, while now in Albany he was supreme. Mr. G. W. Curtis, in one of his pleasant Easy-Chair papers, has given a vivid picture of the city chieftain standing in the Delevan House, and contemplating the assembled legislators as they sat at table, in much the same spirit of pride and joy evinced by Fagin while he watched Masters Dawkins and Bates as they practised thieving in his den. The comparison was not inapt. The other members of the Ring, Sweeny, Connolly, and Hall, were all experienced lobbyists, and they rendered him effective aid; but it was Tweed who, as the "Herald" truly asserted, "carried the Legislature in his pocket."

The circumstances connected with the passage of the city tax levy for 1869 may be cited as a fair sample of his *modus*

operandi in this field of public service. The estimates of the amount needed to carry on the municipal government for the year had been made by the heads of the different departments, and compiled, at the usual time, by the Comptroller and the then acting Mayor, Coman. They had then been presented to the Legislature for approval, and for authority to levy the necessary taxes upon the property of the city. The total amount which the Comptroller and the acting Mayor had fixed upon as necessary for the annual budget was a fraction over twenty millions of dollars. The expenditure of the greater part of this sum was already regulated by law, but a balance in the neighborhood of six millions in amount was estimated as necessary to meet the current expenses of the government. An investigation by the Citizens' Association showed, on the contrary, that this sum exceeded by about one third part the amount which would be properly required, and the counsel of the Association went up to Albany to oppose the approval of the larger sum. Two separate drafts of acts authorizing the county and city budget were introduced, one into each branch of the Legislature. The authorship of both of these was disclaimed by the Comptroller, upon whom the duty of preparing the budget properly devolved, as soon as it was rumored that the Association had discovered them to be so framed as to authorize the levy of a sum unnecessarily large. The two bills, however, ultimately came before the Committee on Cities, a majority of which reported them both to the Assembly, recommending at the same time considerable reductions in several particulars. "This report," as a high authority remarked, "for its regard to the interest of the city, has been unparalleled in rectitude in the annals of the previous seven sessions of the Legislature." The struggle, however, was very far from ended. Mayor Hall, who in a letter to a city newspaper had shortly before complained that sufficient means were not provided to enable the local rulers to carry on the city government, went up to Albany, surrounded by a body-guard of office-holders, and followed by an army of disappointed and anxious claimants. A plot was quietly matured to have a new tax levy prepared, which was to be crowded with items of large amount and in its total should be nearly twice that reported by the commit-

tee, far exceeding even the original estimates of the Comptroller. It also included several new estimates for purposes not previously referred to. This levy was to be suddenly introduced into the Legislature as a substitute for the moderate one already offered, and was to be pushed through the several stages under the pressure of the previous question, thus cutting off all examination of its details. An attempt to carry the plan into effect failed through the blunder of a member who was himself privy to the plot. The next day the original tax levies were called up to take their third reading, and another and more successful attempt was then made. The clerk had barely read the title, on the question of the final passage of the bills, when a Republican member got the floor, produced the two secret levies, and offered them as amendments to the bills before the House. The previous question was then called. The substituted levies represented an increase of four millions over the Comptroller's original estimates. Notwithstanding a vigorous opposition, the majority of the Assembly, which included in it twenty Republicans, voted for the bills, which accordingly went up to the Senate. In that body, however, the secret amendments were disagreed to, and the whole measure went to a committee of conference, which made a reduction of three millions in the amount. This report was finally accepted, and the levies, as reduced, were passed. The invention of this cunning and nearly successful scheme was generally attributed to Mayor Hall, and the following table shows the totals of the original estimate of the Comptroller, the secret levies of the Assembly, and the levies as finally passed:—

CITY LEVY.		
<i>Comptroller's Estimate.</i>	<i>Secret Levy.</i>	<i>Levy as passed.</i>
\$ 4,896,477.06	\$ 7,167,363.06	\$ 5,595,236.29
COUNTY LEVY.		
\$ 1,442,845.00	\$ 3,950,550.00	\$ 2,550,550.00

It was in this Assembly that the Ring was to measure its strength with the disaffected body of its own followers which had now definitely assumed the name of the Young Democracy. The question of a new city charter speedily raised an issue between the two organizations. It was an issue also

which had to be raised, for now the Democratic party for the first time in twenty-five years was in complete control of the government of the State,—a Democratic Governor was sustained by a Democratic majority in the Legislature. The party leaders were bound by countless pledges to restore to the people of New York City the control of their local government, and it only remained to see how those pledges would be redeemed. At last, and only after long delay, the draft of a new charter was submitted to the Assembly by Alexander Frear, an intimate friend of Sweeny's, and it was understood to present at once the views of Sweeny and Tweed and Hall in relation to city governments. In its more important features the proposed charter was flagrantly undemocratic, and it was perfectly manifest that its end and aim was to add to the existing power of the Ring, without bestowing a thought on lost municipal rights. Not unnaturally, therefore, it met with almost universal condemnation, and was consequently abandoned. This defeat so intimidated Sweeny, who was at the time suffering under a periodical dyspeptic attack, that he wholly lost heart, and intimated to his friends, and even went so far as to announce in some of the papers, an intention of withdrawing from politics. Tweed, however, courageously stood his ground and awaited the conflict now clearly impending.

A series of bills which together formed the nucleus of a charter was next introduced by the advocates of reform under the auspices of the Young Democracy. Among those who were consulted in regard to these measures were Messrs. Marble and Tilden, Horace Greeley, Charles Nordhoff, and Jackson S. Schultz, and they also had the approval of the Union League Club, and had been indorsed in a caucus of the Democratic representatives of New York with but one dissenting voice. These bills now passed to a third reading and their adoption seemed imminent, even Tweed having voted for them. Suddenly, and as if by magic, the whole aspect of the question changed. Treason was discovered in the ranks of the reformers, when a Democratic representative of New York City moved to strike out the enacting clause of one of the bills. All the Republican members, who had previously shown a

disposition to support the measures, with some twenty Democrats, among whom were Creamer and Norton, voted for the motion. Thus almost in the twinkling of an eye the fruits of a long winter's work were lost, and the Young Democracy in turn sustained a defeat.

Tweed now sought to effect a compromise, and even went so far as to offer O'Brien two hundred thousand dollars if he would lend his aid towards the passage of such a charter as would prove satisfactory to the Young Democracy. The sum seems large, but it is to be remembered whose the money was, — certainly it did not belong to him who made the offer. It was, however, refused, and Tweed then prepared to battle with his foes. They demanded his resignation of the office of deputy street commissioner; he refused to tender it; and then, through the efforts of O'Brien, Commissioner McLean removed him. He was also threatened with removal from the chairmanship of the Tammany General Committee, and his political ruin seemed imminent. For a moment even his courage and buoyancy are said to have forsaken him in the presence of a few adherents, whom he entreated not to desert him. He even shed tears.

For a brief space the contest now drifted away to the city. A paper was circulated and signed by two hundred and twenty members of the Tammany Hall General Committee, in which Judge Cardozo figured among numerous adherents of the Young Democracy, demanding that Tweed, as chairman of the committee, should convene its members, in order to directly test the relative strength of the opposing factions. Under the terms of its constitution, twenty-five members of the committee can order such a meeting to be held, and the signers of the paper themselves, ten times that number, constituted two thirds of the whole committee. Under this compulsion Tweed finally issued the desired call, and expressed himself ready to test his strength with his enemies. He was not, however, wholly at the end of his resources. Perhaps it was Mr. Peter B. Sweeny who, in imitation of that Emperor he so much admired, devised the *coup d'état* which now ensued. For, finding their opponents in a large majority, the sachems of Tammany Society, eleven in number, and themselves compris-

ing the leading spirits of the Ring, closed their hall, and by the aid of eight hundred policemen prevented the assembling of the General Committee. An angry meeting of the Young Democracy was then held at Irving Hall, at which resolutions denouncing the action of Tweed were passed, and immediately afterwards the struggle was renewed at Albany.

Another charter had meanwhile been prepared by Tweed, and this was now sprung upon the Legislature and pushed rapidly through. On its face and in its earliest stages it was not objectionable, but while *in transitu* many of the more obnoxious features of the Frear charter were foisted upon it, and in this shape it was finally adopted. This dexterous manipulation clearly bespoke the master hand of Sweeny, who had now recovered the use of his digestive functions, and had plucked up sufficient courage to return to Albany in time to administer a death-blow to the Young Democracy. It must not be supposed that the Ring charter passed except in the face of a strenuous opposition. The Union League Club sent a committee of fifteen of its members to Albany to remonstrate against it. Among the city journals, the "Tribune," the "Post," the "World," and the "Sun" pointedly exposed its true nature. Horace Greeley denounced it before the Committee on Cities; and Mr. Tilden did the same before the committee of the Senate, of which Tweed himself was a member. Their efforts, however, were wholly unavailing. Influences far more potent than either argument or denunciation had been brought to bear in the Legislature, for not only were the numerous offices under the new charter freely promised in return for votes, but large direct bribes in money were paid. A clerk in one of the public offices privately assured Mr. Tilden in the choice vernacular of the City Hall, that "the stuff had been sent up"; and certainly it may fairly be questioned whether, even in the days of Walpole and the first Fox, legislative bribery was ever conducted on so colossal a scale. A year later it was stated on the authority of Judge Noah Davis, who derived his information from a prominent lobby agent, that ten thousand dollars had been paid to each of six leading Republican senators as the price of their votes on the charter, while they also received five thou-

sand more for votes on other and kindred bills of the session. An equally good authority has made the assertion that, all together, between twelve and thirteen hundred thousand dollars were expended in influencing votes on this question in the two houses. No drafts passed; no footprints of corruption were left to guide future investigations; the cash itself was forthcoming and freely changed hands, so that Tweed was wont afterwards in his characteristic way to gleefully show his friends the safe in his office in which the money had been kept until it was called for. The corruption fund had been drawn together from many sources, and its large amount affords no just cause of surprise. These men were fighting, not for their lives, but for a license to steal. They knew perfectly well the extent to which their plunderings could be carried, provided they were but able to sustain themselves in power. If money, therefore, would carry the point for them, money was of no consideration whatever; they knew they could rob the exchequer, if they only did not lose it. Accordingly Tweed is said to have openly told O'Brien that he was himself prepared to risk a million dollars on the conflict, while the whole body of Ring contractors were pitilessly levied upon. Garvey and Ingersoll contributed \$50,000 each; Keyser, Miller, and Hall each \$25,000; and others in similar proportions. These sums were risked, it is true; for if the Young Democracy had triumphed little mercy would have been shown to that set of thieves, and the Court House would have known them no more; but the moment the power of the Ring was re-established, then the repayment of every advance was secured, not only in its principal but with interest such as no usurer would have dared to extort. It was the liquidation of this corruption fund indeed which proved the heaviest duty which devolved on that famous Board of Audit hereafter to be described.

The exact disposition made of this fund has never yet been divulged; it is by no means impossible, however, that in time the dark places in regard to it may be made light. Several men could probably reveal the whole story, and one of these may hereafter find his account in so doing. William M. Tweed is now an old man and in a felon's cell; the term of his imprisonment is long, and his desire for freedom must be very

great. Doubtless a knowledge of the past is his present stock in trade, and he will be disposed to use or to reserve it as may seem most likely to secure for him that which he most desires. His continued imprisonment is a standing menace against many men influential in the politics of New York. It places them in the hands of their adversaries. The pardon of an old, broken-down criminal might well be regarded as a small price to pay for the ruin of some formidable political opponent, and Tweed's negotiations were very impartially distributed. A crafty governor, a heated contest, and a dreaded rival are the elements of the problem; the three concurring would throw light on what is now a dark page in legislative history. Yet something is known of it; as much has been vaguely and loosely asserted. The dealings with the Republican senators have already been referred to, though it would be difficult to do justice to the singular faction the members of which were known as "Tammany Republicans." These men were, take them for all in all, the lowest, the most corrupt, and the most degraded political result of the prolific soil of New York. They called themselves Republicans simply because they saw their way to what they wanted through the probable supremacy of that party in the State at large. The miserable attempt to govern New York City through the agency of State commissioners had proved a perfect El Dorado to these men; it supplied them with a whole stock in trade, and set a real money value on their despicable selves. They at once revelled in the bright sunshine from Albany, and slept peacefully under the shade of Tammany. One day in speaking of them, Barnard vehemently exclaimed, "You may put it down for certain that every Tammany Republican is a thief!" — and Barnard's opinion on that point is entitled to weight. This influence was represented at Albany in the charter struggle by Henry Smith, the police commissioner, a warm personal friend as well as political ally of Tweed's. When in the heat of the contest the latter was removed from the office of deputy street commissioner, Smith was at the same time displaced from a collectorship in the Street-Opening Department. It was by the aid of Republican votes in the Legislature that the Ring always succeeded in carrying its worst measures. How large

a portion of the contents of Tweed's safe was absorbed in this quarter is not known, but rumor at the time whispered of portentous sums.

Senators Norton and Creamer were among those who voted for the charter, and they were most loudly denounced as renegades from the ranks of the Young Democracy "reformers." Their reward is asserted to have been most liberal. Creamer, it is said, received two hundred thousand dollars and a seat in Congress; while Norton got fifty thousand dollars in cash, besides the large incidental benefits which accrued from a line of city contracts likewise secured to him.

But the great triumph of the Ring in this struggle was that which it won when it brought the Citizens' Association of New York City, with the venerable and highly respected Peter Cooper at its head, into the support of its charter. The story of this Association supplies, by the way, a very curious and characteristic page in the history of the Ring. It was, as its name indicates, an organization for purposes of reform, founded and supported by men of the highest character and with the best intentions. Its aim was to lay before the public accurate information about municipal affairs, and to devise means of checking municipal extravagance and misgovernment. Its patrons were too busily occupied with their private concerns to devote much time to these objects; and hence its affairs were necessarily left in the charge of a few individuals, among whom Nathaniel Sands and Joseph Henry were most prominent. They adroitly turned the machinery intrusted to their charge to their personal advantage, and in due time sold out to the Ring. Sands was eminently successful in hoodwinking those whom it was his interest to deceive, especially Peter Cooper, who to the very last retained his faith in him. This gentlemanly member of the American branch of the family of the late lamented Uriah Heep had adopted "reforming" as a business, in consequence of an unfortunate bankruptcy which befell him while pursuing a mercantile calling. Besides a regular salary, he received a commission on all subscriptions in aid of the Citizens' Association; and it is charged that he extorted considerable sums from banks, insurance companies, and merchants through a process bearing

a close family resemblance to "black-mail." From the Ring Sands obtained his own price. He was very instrumental in passing the Tax Commissioners' Act through the Legislature of 1868-69, the object of which was the expulsion of Republicans from office and an increase of the power and means of plunder of the Ring. A decided majority of those Republicans who were not in the market opposed the measure from first to last, though a few honest men among them were drawn into its support by the assurance that it would disperse a nest of "Radicals," and install a healthier race of Republicans in their stead. The measure was carried by the purchase of votes, and to satisfy the Republicans who had supported it in good faith, and it is said at the instance of a large body of tax-payers, Sands and another were appointed by Connolly commissioners under it. The pay of each commissioner was \$10,000; and there was no limit fixed to the amount they might spend for clerk hire. No one suspected the meaning of Sands's appointment; and even the "Tribune," while protesting against the act itself, said, "We believe he will prove a faithful, energetic, efficient officer, and are glad to find the office so well filled."

The great achievement of Mr. Sands was, however, in the charter struggle. While it was impending, he frequently sought interviews with Mr. Tilden and other friends of reform, assuring them that the members of the Ring had become conservative; that they were not ambitious of more wealth, and that great peril might come to tax-payers if they were turned out and leaner and hungrier thieves installed. At last on April 2d, the Citizens' Association, by a memorial relative to the charter signed by Peter Cooper, asked the Senate for "its enactment into law"; Mr. Greeley afterwards stated in the "Tribune" that he had been "met before the Committee on Cities by an officer and representative of this Citizens' Association, who resisted the demands for amendments, and urged the committee to report, and the Senate to pass, the bill as it had passed the Assembly." This representation prevailed; "and," Mr. Greeley goes on to add, with true newspaper vigor, "sundry fat offices dispensed and to be dispensed to officers of the Citizens' Association form a part of their dividend of the spoils." Sands was in fact made School Commissioner, and Henry, his brother officer of the Associa-

tion, received a place under the Dock Commission. So they also had their reward.

The passage of the charter was the crowning legislative victory of the Ring. It had triumphed beyond all expectation, and its opponents were correspondingly dismayed. The "Sun" and the "World" forthwith abandoned the cause of the Young Democracy; and the last named of these two journals went over bodily to the Ring, and thereafter displayed no less vigor in defence than it had previously shown in denunciation. Even the "Times," through some strange perversion of judgment, encouraged a sickly belief that benefits were to result from the new charter. The day after its passage, in an article headed "Municipal Reform," that paper hailed the measure as a step in advance, and even derided the Union League and Mr. Greeley for their lack of influence in fruitlessly opposing it. The editorial writer then went on to express his confident belief that "our citizens will have reason to count yesterday's work in the Legislature as most important and salutary." On the 8th of the same month the same paper ventured the startling opinion that "Senator Tweed is in a fair way to distinguish himself as a reformer"; while at a later date it made open reference to the aid given by the Republicans in the passage of the charter, and said, "Mayor Hall and his associates will doubtless show a proper appreciation of the assistance thus rendered them." In assuming this tone, however, the "Times" only gave utterance to a very prevailing public sentiment. Looking back, at this time, over the brief space of only four years, it is almost startling to notice the state of utter demoralization into which public opinion had fallen in New York City between 1866 and 1872. The conditions had been favorable, and the Ring did its work well. In the face of all human experience, men had actually come to believe that figs might be gathered from thistles. At this time strangers began to hear on all sides of the wonderful ability of those who made up the Ring, — of Sweeny's reflective disposition, and of Tweed's executive capacity; Hall's absurdities were gently condoned, and Connolly's financial achievements were lauded. The citizens of New York actually persuaded themselves that they had succeeded in gorging those beasts of prey to repletion, and that now, forthwith, the leopard

would change his spots. They were destined to a rude awakening from that pleasant dream, and they had yet to learn that even New York City is not exempt from the operation of those great laws which have from the beginning ordained that the ways of the transgressor are hard. For the time being, however, the new dispensation of the surfeited thief was very fashionable. Tweed and Sweeny and Connolly and Hall were no longer poor, so that now they must needs become what the world called honest and reliable; they would forever forswear all evil communications, and purge and live cleanly. Then, too, they were so very, very able!

The charter, the passage of which had cost so much to those who procured it, was worth much more. In effect it committed the entire government of New York City into the hands of four men, — the Mayor (Hall), the Comptroller (Connolly), the Commissioner of Public Works (Tweed), and the President of the Board of Parks (Sweeny). In their persons every function of public authority was concentrated. They could levy taxes, appoint all subordinate officers, prescribe ordinances, and also provide for their enforcement. The charter forms the larger portion of a bulky volume, and it is here necessary to present only a few of its leading features. In the discussion which had preceded its passage it had been urged by Hoffman and others that the powers of the Mayor were then far too limited, and that he was indeed little more than a mere legislative figure-head. Under the new charter the opposite extreme was reached, and the entire city government was practically concentrated in that official. He in the first place appointed all the heads of the departments, excepting the Comptroller and Corporation Counsel, and the tax levy afterwards conferred upon him the right to appoint both of these excepted officers as well. Thus of his own volition, without any obligation to consult with another human being, the Mayor possessed supreme authority over every administrative officer of the city government. Again, the charter directed that each head of the department should report to the Mayor "at such times" and "in such forms" and "under such rules as he may prescribe." No other person or tribunal had power to compel any of these officials to do this, and any one or all of them, with the Mayor's connivance, might follow

the example Connolly had already set, and indefinitely postpone issuing any statement of the condition of his department. These reports were furthermore to be made in form as directed by the Mayor, and it would thus be easy, with a little connivance, to conceal almost any amount of frauds. These excessive powers were also conferred only upon the existing Mayor, and that Mayor was A. Oakey Hall. In order also to absolutely prevent the possibility of any interloper succeeding to his position and power, it was provided that, in case of his death, resignation, or removal, the duties of his office should devolve upon the Comptroller. Each head of department was allowed to regulate the appointment and pay of his subordinates, without the interference of the Common Council, which had hitherto been provided for, and the way to the multiplication of offices was thus made perfectly open. The Common Council was, in fact, prohibited from passing any ordinances in relation to the internal affairs of any of the departments, and, indeed, it was one redeeming feature in the charter that this most corrupt of bodies was reduced to the contemptible insignificance it merited; and even the right to regulate and take charge of the streets below Fourteenth, which the charter gave it, was taken away by the tax levy. The different heads of the departments were appointed for four, six, or eight years. It devolved upon each of these officials to prepare estimates of the amounts annually required for the use of his department, which estimates were to be revised by the Mayor and Comptroller, who were clothed with absolute power to allow the amount estimated or to cut it down, as they might see fit. Thus the Mayor was in complete control of the city government: first, through his power of appointing the heads of departments to office; second, through his power of calling them to account; third, through his power of deciding, in connection with the Comptroller, how much money each department should expend during the year. The new Board of Supervisors under the charter had no control over the Mayor's action, and could not pass any bill or act, even by a three-fourths vote, without his concurrence. The tax levy passed just subsequently to the charter still further added to the powers of the Mayor, giving to him the appointment and removal of all the court attendants.

In connection with the Comptroller, the Mayor was also authorized to fix the annual salaries of all the civil judges at any sum they might see fit, not exceeding ten thousand dollars. In view of these extraordinary powers conferred upon him; in view of his opportunities for ascertaining the existence of fraud, which he was the only man in the city clothed with the power to find out and expose; in view of the fact that he only was empowered to impeach the three individuals who, with himself, monopolized the municipal government, and that no provision was made by which he could be checked or removed, — in view of all these facts, it seems inexplicable that any reasonable doubt can remain of the existing Mayor's complicity in the corrupt schemes which were afterwards perpetrated by his associates. These wary professional thieves did not thus insert their necks in a noose, and then place the end of the halter in the hands of any but a trusted confederate. Such was Mayor Hall's attitude towards his confederates of the Ring.

The four were thus supreme. With supremacy, however, came responsibility. So long as the members of the Ring were content to remain obscure, their fraudulent acts might be fortunate enough to pass unnoticed. Their glory was their ruin. They could now no longer throw the blame of their misrule upon the hated "Radical" commissions nominated at Albany, but thenceforth it was to rest where it rightfully belonged. Their charter had, in so far as it might, introduced the true Napoleonic idea of Cæsarism into the conduct of municipal affairs, and in this respect it bore very clearly the impress of Sweeny's thought. The "fierce democracy" of New York City was to elect a ruler, and in the hands of that ruler all power was to be concentrated. But, as the great modern exponent of that dispensation was shortly after this time to learn to his cost, the essential condition to Cæsarism was the success of the Cæsar. But the Cæsar of the Ring had already been selected in advance, and there was a bathos in the spectacle which had in it an element that was irresistibly ludicrous, when the laurel-crown of the municipal Cæsar was seen to throw its shadow over the familiar eye-glasses of A. Oakey Hall.

CHARLES F. WINGATE.